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BRUSH AND PENCIL

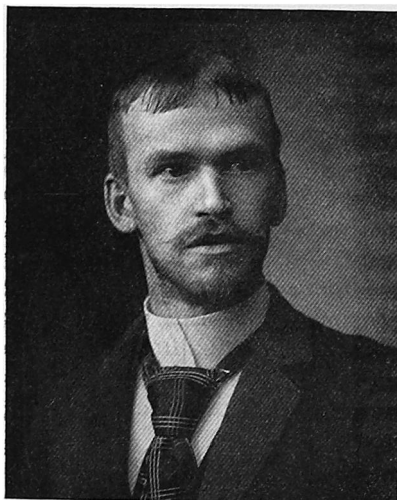
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EDGAR CAMERON, PAINTER

Easily earned reputations and quick successes are generally acquired through specialization. The man who applies all his energies to the study of one subject must gain a more complete knowledge of it than one who divides his attention among several. The painter who thus restricts himself to one class of subjects and who develops

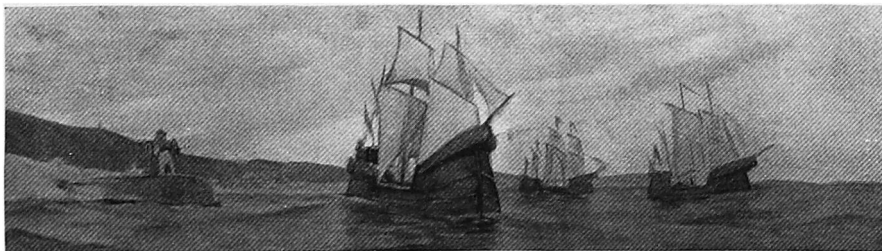


EDGAR CAMERON
From a Photograph

a system of painting, produces work which is readily recognized, and he soon becomes known as a painter of whatever line of subjects he has chosen. But when he has played the same tune with slight variations many times, when, in a word, he has ceased to study and to search, he becomes perfunctory and his paintings become articles of commerce rather than works of art. Then, tastes change and new art movements result from these changes in the direction of the thought of the world, and the artist who is no longer capable of receiving new impressions and of giving expression to them becomes a mere "landmark of arrested development."

Edgar Cameron has been exhibiting his paintings publicly since 1888, when his first picture was shown in the Paris Salon. Each year he displays works in the Chicago exhibitions which differ in character and usually in subject from those he has previously shown. There is enough of a family resemblance between them to indicate a common parentage, but in all there are distinctive characteristics which are not the result of a studied determination on the part of the artist to avoid repetitions, but of a policy always to paint what interests him and offers new problems. The result has been that he has made steady progress and has gained in scope as well as in technical ability.

Cameron's picture, "In the Studio," showed good draftsmanship,



DECORATIVE PANEL
By Edgar Cameron

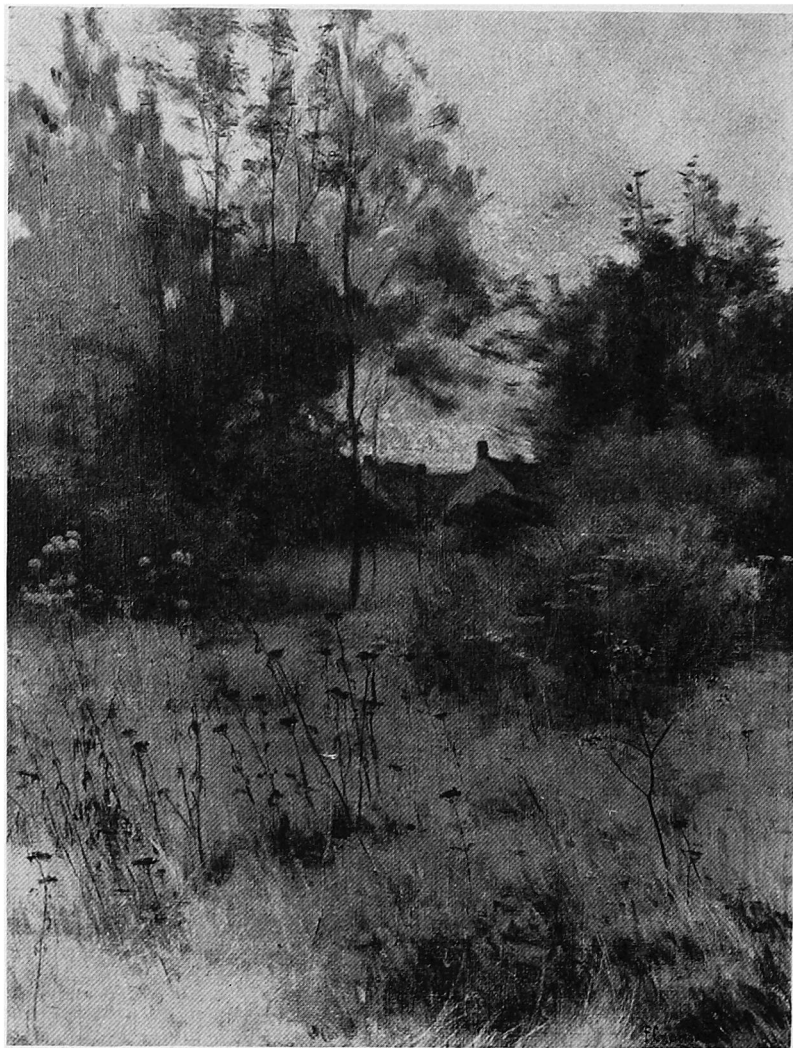
and was well painted, but betrayed clearly that the painter was still full of the ideas which he had acquired in a serious course of academical training. It was not until two years later, when chance led him to paint some military subjects, that he began to give expression to his own personality. He had just returned from Paris and among other work which he brought with him was a copy made in the Luxembourg Museum of Aimé Morot's "Battle of Reichoffen." This came to the notice of E. C. Moderwell, formerly major of the Twelfth Ohio Cavalry, who in one engagement near Marion, Virginia, received two wounds, had his horse shot from under him at the head of a charge, and was taken prisoner. Mr. Moderwell gave the young artist his first important commission—to paint a picture of the charge which proved so eventful to him. This picture, which was a large one, was composed from descriptions of several of the participants in the fight, with the aid of photographs of the locality where the battle took place, war-time photographs of several of the officers engaged, and studies of landscape, horses, and figures made by the artist.

The interest which he had taken in this work led the artist to paint another military subject, "The Stragglers," which was shown at the exhibition of the Chicago Society of Artists and was burned on the night following the opening. The fire, which destroyed the entire



DECORATIVE PANEL
By Edgar Cameron

collection, was a severe blow to all of the artists represented, but with more spirit than reflection they decided to hold another exhibition a month later. Cameron found that of this time it was possible to

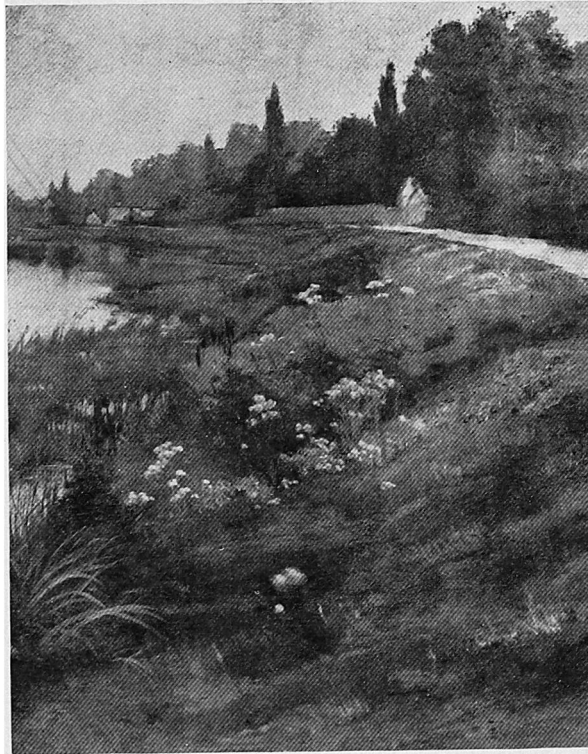


GRAY NOVEMBER
By Edgar Cameron

devote but sixteen days to painting a picture and decided to repaint "The Stragglers." It was painted larger in size, and some changes were made in the composition. It was completed on time and an Honorable Mention was awarded to it, in the Yerkes prize compe-

tion. The higher prizes were awarded to works which had not been completed in time for the first exhibition.

In 1892 Chicago was in the midst of preparations for the World's Fair, and Cameron, along with some of the other young artists of the city, found congenial employment as assistants to some of the Eastern artists who had been given commissions for mural decorations for the



BANKS OF THE SEINE
By Edgar Cameron

buildings of the Exposition. Cameron worked with Robert Reid on the dome in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts building, and with Walter McEwen on large tympana for the same structure. He was also employed on less important work and was given a commission to execute two panels, seven by seventy feet, for the interior of the Transportation building.

Some time previous to this he had undertaken the writing of a weekly art review for a leading Chicago newspaper. This was a sort of work which proved most agreeable to him.

It gave him opportunities for continued study in many directions and, affording a source of revenue, saved him from the necessity of teaching or painting "pot-boilers," which were the only alternatives Chicago presented at that time to most of those who were struggling to follow an artistic career. During the six months which followed the opening of the Exposition there was enough art to be seen to require almost daily articles, and during this period copy pages took the place of canvas and pencils that of brushes.

At the close of the World's Fair, Cameron returned to Paris for three years. Two winters were spent in study in the schools, and

the remainder of the time was devoted to painting pictures. A part of the time was spent in painting landscapes along the Seine and in the forest of Fontainebleau. One summer was spent in the fishing village of Etaples, on the coast of the Channel, and the last winter was occupied in the painting of a large, religious subject, "The Youth of Christ."

This picture, which is the most important of the canvases brought back from Europe and shown as a collection at a Chicago gallery, is an idealistic creation depicting the boy Jesus at a period of his life of which the Bible gives no record. He is represented standing at the



A FRIEND THROUGH INTEREST
By Edgar Cameron



OLD AGE
By Edgar Cameron

bench in Joseph's carpenter shop, as if in the midst of his worldly occupations his thoughts had turned to the career for which he was pre-ordained. There appears before him the vision of a spectral cross, from which a dim light is reflected on the figure, robed in a single tunic of white. In the soulful expression of the face and the suggested movement of the figure there is a sentiment of suppressed emotion forcefully depicted. The rude bench, the primitive tools, and the curled shavings scattered on the floor show a conscientious completeness which bespeaks the reverent feeling in which the picture was conceived. The words of St. Luke, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stat-

ure and in favor with God and man," seem to have suggested the subject. This painting is now in the Union League Club, Chicago.

Among the other pictures which were exhibited at this time were some landscapes which were charming for their poetic feeling and completeness of the delicate detail.

Most of Mr. Cameron's landscapes are composed and executed in



LEDA
By Edgar Cameron

such a way that the attention is focused near the foreground—the portion of a landscape which is most often slighted. This may result from a temperamental interest which the artist takes in his immediate surroundings. In his work he has also never shown a disposition to avoid difficulties, but seems rather to take delight in them. His "Gray November" is an example. The foreground is an abandoned lot of ground overgrown with flowers, weeds, and shrubbery which has taken on the yellows and browns of autumn. It is painted carefully, the plants are drawn with an accuracy which permits their identification. Beyond are groups of trees simply and broadly treated which mark the distance except a glance of the roofs of a village and an effective gray sky.

Two pictures of interiors with old women seated by lonely fire-

places, shown in the same collection, have something of the quiet melancholy which is characteristic of the works of Israels and some of



THE YOUTH OF CHRIST
By Edgar Cameron

the other modern Dutch painters. They are low-toned color harmonies in keeping with the character of their subjects. They were

painted while the artist was living among the poor fisher folk and peasants in France, and he seems to have been deeply impressed with the hopeless poverty of their existence.



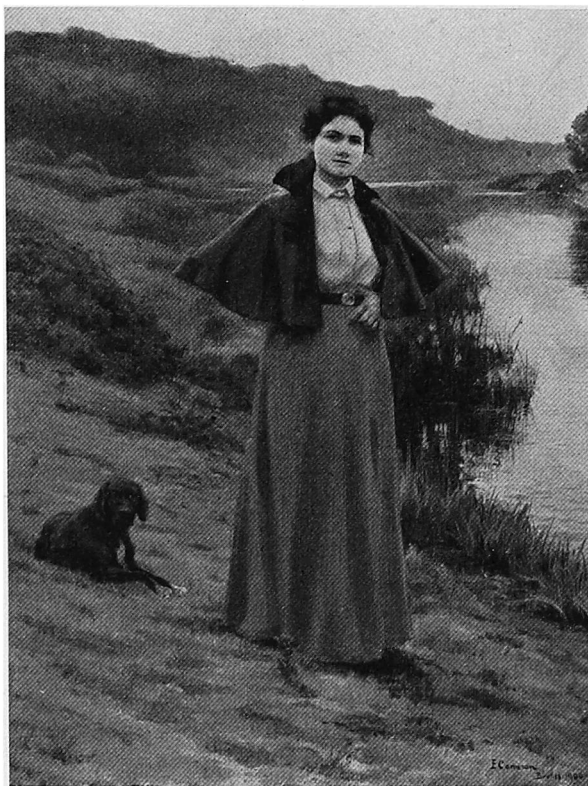
CARMEN
By Edgar Cameron

The next important group of paintings by Cameron showed a decided change, both of manner and of feeling. They were full of light and color, and cheerful in subject. They were the result of a summer and early autumn spent in St. Joseph, Michigan. They were chiefly landscapes, bright country roadways, views of the beach of Lake Michigan, and the river. Two night scenes alone had something of the sentiment of his earlier work. One figure subject was the result of the idea that it is possible to make an artistic painting and at the same time embody a pleasing subject which might appeal to the public which demands a story. It was called "A Friend Through Interest," and showed a lane with a picturesque old apple-tree hanging over a fence and a bridge in the foreground which in itself would have made an interesting subject. The story is added by the figure of a young woman carrying a pail of milk, with a half-grown cat sidling beside her and displaying its concern for a prospect of a share of the contents of the pail.

Two years ago Mr. Cameron exhibited two pictures, each displaying study in new directions. One was a charming and poetic conception of Leda. The lightly draped figure of the young woman is shown in a secluded clearing in a wood by the side of a quiet pool where "saw the swan his neck of

arched snow and oared himself along with majesty." The other picture was an interior of a glass factory with half-nude figures of the blowers at work in the glow of the furnace. It was a study of contrasting warm and cool lights successfully elaborated. It was sold on the opening night of the exhibition to the "Chicago Woman's Aid Club," which had earnestly taken up the study of labor problems.

Last spring at the Chicago Artist's Exhibition, Mr. Cameron exhibited a landscape, a figure subject and a marine. The marine view was painted from studies made on the ocean the summer before. It was broad and effective in treatment and vigorous in its effect. It showed an expanse of the blue water of mid-ocean agitated by a brisk breeze and a sky full of moving, fleecy clouds. Its title, "The Voiceful Sea," was a fitting one. The picture is now the property of the Arché Club. The other pictures were an evening effect with the figure of a young woman ac-



THE RENDEZVOUS
By Edgar Cameron

companied by a dog walking on a sedgy river bank, and a landscape showing the flowery banks of the same river mottled with patches of bright afternoon sunlight and the shadows of trees and the summer residences which lined its banks.

The latest picture which Mr. Cameron has painted is one which demonstrates clearly the value of a varied training in the painting of many subjects. It was a commission for a seasonable subject for Decoration Day and had to be composed to fit unusual proportions of length and breadth. It was intended for reproduction and required an amount of sentiment sufficient to make



A SURPRISE
By Edgar Cameron

it popular with the general public. Two weeks was allowed for its execution.

The subject selected was that of an aged mother with her son's uniform, sword, and other mementoes on a chair opposite her, and a letter in her hand. In the center of the picture was an open fireplace with the fire throwing a faint glow on the surrounding objects. Hanging above the old-fashioned marble mantel was the portrait of the son as he might have appeared in the Civil War period, with a flag draped about the frame. The figure of the woman and the interior, which were typically American and sufficiently picturesque, were found, almost as the artist painted them, in a village about seventy-five miles from Chicago.

Besides producing pictures, Mr. Cameron has found time to take an active part in art matters in other ways. He was vice-president of the Chicago Society of Artists during the period of the World's Fair. He has held four private exhibitions of his work in Chicago, was organizer of a pastel exhibition, and took the initiative in the project of auction sales in which other artists took part. He has acted at various periods as instructor in the Art Academy and the School of Illustration in Chicago. He has written regularly for the press on art topics. Last year he was appointed a member of the International jury of the Paris Exposition, being assigned to Class XII., which included exhibits of photography, photographic materials, and photo-mechanical processes.

Ever since his work on decorations for the World's Fair, Cameron has devoted considerable attention to the subject of mural painting, and has made compositions whenever a possibility for securing such work presented itself.

The fact that he is so well equipped as a draftsman and as a painter has led many of his friends to advise him to choose a line of

subjects, but he has persistently refused to do this and holds to the belief that it is not subject so much as the expression of an artist's own personality which makes his work valuable. Without aiming for variety or searching for novelty he has made it a rule to paint such subjects as he found of interest to himself at all times, believing that this is the best way to produce work which will interest others. His early training may be to some extent responsible for this.

He began to draw cartoons and to engrave them on wood when still a schoolboy, and feeling the need of some training in drawing, he attended the Chicago Academy of Design for a short time during two of his summer vacations. After an interval of several years he went to New York to study at the Art Students' League. Although he had not continued to draw he had grown in perception, for within three weeks after he arrived in New York he made a full-length drawing of the Discobolus, which admitted him to the life class. This escape from the "Antique" Mr. Cameron considers a most fortunate circumstance. From the start he was spared from the influences of tradition.

The next year he went to Paris, and after six months in the Julian Academy, too short a time to feel much of the effects of the academical training of Boulanger and Lefebvre, he passed the examination for the École des Beaux Arts, where he entered the studio of Cabanel, who was one of the most liberal of masters. His evenings he spent in modeling in clay at the École des Arts Decoratifs, and his summers in the country studying landscape, chiefly at Barbizon and Grez, where there were several older artists.

After two years in the Beaux Arts he went to Venice with two friends and began his first attempts at picture-making, but did not show any of this work until after his admission to the Salon a year later.

CHARLES M. TOWNE.

